

"MESSALINA" ✓

JUL 31 1924

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Synopsis

*Conceived and Produced in its entirety by Enrico Guazzoni* ✓

In 44 B.C. Caligula the Tyrant reigned on the throne of the Caesars. In the same Imperial Palace lived Messalina, the beautiful, ambitious and dissolute wife of Claudius, a consul, and nephew to Caligula. Claudius was a good man but timid, and lived in dread of his Uncle, the Emperor, and his scheming wife, Messalina.

Messalina took a fancy to Cajus, an officer of the Praetorian guards; but when she realized that she could use Marcus, chief of the Praetorian guards, as a stepping stone to secure the Imperial Crown for herself, she jilted Cajus for Marcus.

Caligula was assassinated by the conspirators, headed by Marcus, and the Praetorians forced the senate to elect Claudius as successor to Caligula. When Messalina became Empress, she gave her love again to Cajus.

There lived in Rome an Egyptian princess called Mirit, who was the intimate friend and companion of Messalina. Mirit was loved by, but did not love, Appollonius, a wealthy Roman Senator, renowned for his love of women, horses, and wild living.

Urged on by Ennio, his champion chariot driver, (a captive Prince of Royal Persian blood, but now a slave), Appollonius purchased Ela a Greek slave girl, whom Ennio loved. Another Persian slave, named Tigrane, exceptionally large and strong, was Ennio's friend and constant companion.

Messalina was wont to disguise herself at night and visit the suburra, the slums of Rome, in search of adventure. One night she was assaulted by three drunkards. Her screams were heard by Ela, Ennio and Tigrane who were near by and who ran to her rescue. Messalina fell in love with Ennio at sight. Princess Mirit was also infatuated with Ennio. Messalina and Mirit became bitter rivals.

In spite of Princess Mirit's ardent advances, Ennio spurned her love. She warned him that she would find the girl he loved and avenge herself on her. Mirit ordered that Ela be beaten. But this did not satisfy her entirely. She planned something better; to avenge herself on Messalina as well, through Ennio, by having Ennio's horses drugged before the races knowing that the boy would be killed by order of the Emperor when he lost the race.

The horses were drugged by a stableman, who stricken with remorse informed Messalina of the plot. Messalina immediately rushed with the gladiators to the rescue of Ennio who had fallen, badly wounded. Messalina took Ennio to her palace amid the insults of the angry populace.

Mirit, seeing that her scheme had failed again, turned her vengeance on Ela by sending her to prison. Tigrene rescued the girl, and took her to a place of safety. She was found by the prison guards however, and brought back to the princess' palace.

Mirit told Appollonius she would accept his attentions, if he gives her ownership of Ennio. Messalina refused to give up Ennio and ordered the gladiators to kill Mirit. Claudius intervened and compelled Messalina to surrender Ennio to Mirit.

Mirit gave Ennio his choice - love and riches with her, or death. He chose death. Furious with him, Mirit ordered that Ela be sacrificed to Isis. Tigrene again rushed to the rescue of his two friends, but he was able only to rescue Ennio. Ennio and Tigren collected a mob, rushed to the palace and set fire to the huge building in an attempt to rescue Ela. She was freed, and Princess Mirit fell into the trap of lions which she had set for Ennio and Tigrene.

In the meantime, Messalina, enraged with Claudius for having humiliated her before her rival, conspired against Claudius through Cajus. In order to force Claudius to divorce her, she planned a public revel in which she appeared with Cajus. Claudius granted her the divorce, but ordered that she be killed. She realized that her end had come, and rather than submit to Claudius's orders, she stabbed herself.

Ennio and Ela found happiness in their mutual love.

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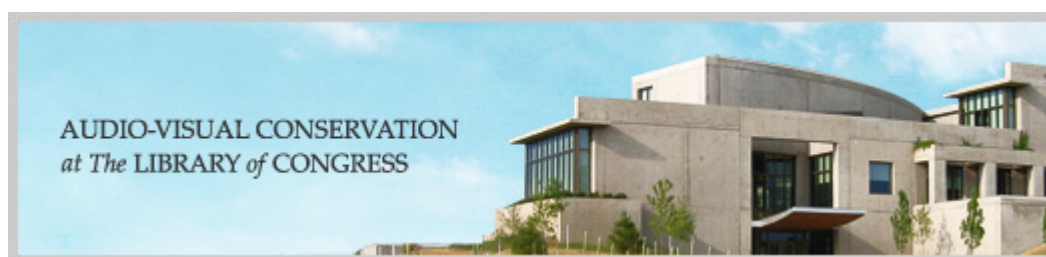
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